

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 COME-00 AGR-05 TRSE-00 TAR-01

L-02 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 SS-15 SP-02 SAB-01 INRE-00

NSCE-00 SSO-00 /047 W

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O R 272156Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3420

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

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FROM AMBASSADOR JORDEN

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, EAGR, PN

SUBJ: 1975 MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM

REF: STATE 68498

1. I TALKED TO PRESIDENT LAKAS TODAY (MARCH 27) JUST BEFORE HE DEAPRTED ON HOLIDAY WEEKEND. WHILE EXPRESSING UNDERSTANDING OF GOP DESIRE TO EXPORT MORE MEAT, I EXPLAINED THE METHOD OF QUOTA CALCULATION AND STRESSED URGENCY OF AGREEING TO THE VOLUNTARY RESTRAINT PROGRAM TO AVOID HAVING A SMALLER QUOTA IMPOSED. PRESIDENT LAKAS OBSERVED THAT IT WAS BETTER TO AGREE TO A LARGER QUOTA THAN HAVE A SMALL ONE IMPOSED. HE PROMISED TO CONTACT GENERAL TORRIJOS AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT GERARDO GONZALEZ TO EXPLAIN THE PROBLEM AND THEN TO LET ME KNOW WHAT THEIR ANSWER WAS.

2. I ALSO HAD A MEMBER OF MY STAFF DISCUSS MEAT RESTRAINT PROGRAM WITH AGRICULTURE VICE MINISTER GUSTAVO GONZALEZ THIS MORNING. GOZALEZ SAID THAT THE EMBASSY'S NOTE NO. 2, WHICH ASKED FOR AGREEMENT TO THE 3.0 MILLION POUND

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LEVEL HAD BEEN REFERRED TO HIM FROM THE FOREIGN OFFICE

AND THAT THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (MIDA) HAD REPLIED RECOMMENDING A REQUEST FOR A QUOTA OF 6.0 MILLION POUNDS. THUS THE REQUEST FOR A 3.0 MILLION POUND LEVEL HAS BEEN REJECTED BY MIDA. MIDA'S RESPONSE WAS SENT TO FOREIGN OFFICE ON FEBRUARY 25, BUT HAS NOT YET BEEN TRANSMITTED TO EMBASSY. THE VICE MINISTER FELT THAT MIDA'S POSITION HAD ALREADY BEEN STATED IN REJECTING THE 3.0 MILLION POUND FIGURE AND THAT A LOWER FIGURE WAS THEREFORE UNACCEPTABLE.

3. ALTHOUGH THE VICE MINISTER WAS AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT AGREEING TO THE 2.5 MILLION POUND LEVEL, HE WAS STILL UNWILLING TO COMMIT THE GOP. HE SAID THAT HIS MINISTER IS UNAVAILABLE, BEING WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS AND UNITED BRANDS REPRESENTATIVE. AS BOTH TODAY AND TOMORROW ARE OFFICIAL HOLIDAYS, NEITHER IS THERE ANYONE AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE WHO CAN COMMIT THE GOP TO THE PROGRAM.

4. EMBASSY WILL ADVISE IMMEDIATELY IF PRESIDENT LAKAS' APPROACHES TO GENERAL TORRIJOS AND/OR AGRICULTURE MINISTER GERARDO GONZALEZ RESULT IN ACCEPTANCE OF RESTRAINT LEVEL.
JORDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MEATS, IMPORT QUOTAS, PROGRAMS (PROJECTS)
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PANAMA01767
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750108-0075
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975039/aaaaaifj.tel
Line Count: 83
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 68498
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 SEP 2003 by ElyME>; APPROVED <09 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: 1975 MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM
TAGS: ETRD, EAGR, PN, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006